

On the Teaching of Theory Teaching: A Selected Bibliography of Music Theory Pedagogy

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In recent years, music theory pedagogy has gradually, although slowly, been taking its place alongside metatheory, aesthetics, analytical systems, psychoacoustics, history of theory, etc., as a topic worthy of study, research and speculation within the larger diversified field of music theory. One of the reasons for its slow-paced emergence is that the sub-domain of pedagogy itself branches off into so many additional subdivisions and sub-specialties such as learning theory, curriculum design, teaching strategies, CAI, textbook construction, etc., and includes the subjects of harmony, counterpoint, form, analysis, composition, orchestration, ear training, sight singing, keyboard, etc. No standard reference works or journals for theory pedagogy exist and the topic is so wide-ranging with information about it scattered among so many sources that—like a slippery bar of soap—it is difficult to grip.

Almost all major graduate departments of music and even many undergraduate programs now offer a theory pedagogy course. These courses, which have as their goal the training of college-level theory teachers, are themselves often difficult to organize and teach. The potential image of these courses as a kind of simple-minded music education "methods" class is not one that most theory teachers would be eager to encourage or one that matches the intellectual challenges of typical graduate theory courses in other areas. Many of these courses spend substantial amounts of

time—and properly so—in reviewing standard texts, but without a larger conceptual framework in which to place and compare these materials, this activity can often seem like busywork. A more narrow focus for some courses is a study of the way theory is taught at the student's own school without reference to the similarities and differences of other approaches in other kinds of programs.

The bibliography that follows is intended to suggest possible readings (for students and teachers) which could enrich the content of theory pedagogy courses and provide the perspective and springboard for more meaningful classroom discussion. In addition, such a listing might be valuable to researchers in theory pedagogy or simply be of interest to those in any area of theory who wish to investigate a particular aspect of teaching. My goal for this bibliography has been to represent the greatest variety of different pedagogical viewpoints and the greatest variety of different theory topics. My citations include references to the standard theory-related journals, books, and also other more obscure sources. A small sample of unpublished papers is included as well; copies can often be obtained from the authors. An attempt has been made to be comprehensive but not exhaustive. Many items that duplicate other entries have been omitted. A bibliography that doubles the size of this one could probably be constructed but without adding significantly to its usefulness. Representative examples from such areas as dissertations and theses, computer instruction, the psychology of music, testing and grading, and the group dynamics of teacher/class rapport have been added. Many items, of course, include bibliographies or references of their own for further investigations.

The following topics have not been included for the obvious reason that each subject is of such immense scope that it would require its own lengthy bibliography (they are no less important, however, as part of a well-rounded pedagogy course):

1. Music theory textbooks and teaching materials (the actual content and especially the tacet underlying philosophical assumptions provide excellent food for thought).
2. Reviews of textbooks (often valuable for the clash between the biases and value systems of reviewer and author).
3. Pre-college theory teaching (many topics will unavoidably overlap with the content and approaches of high school theory classes).
4. Treatises or articles on analytical techniques or systems.
5. Musical perception, memory, cognition, musical information processing, auditory research, etc.

(See the new journal, Psychomusicology, for coverage of some of these areas).

Brief annotations accompany some of the especially notable entries. The main value of this bibliography, I feel, is that information about theory teaching has, for the first time, been gathered together all in one place.

A Selected Bibliography of Music Theory Pedagogy

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